



Leonie Cooper AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
Greater London Authority

Cllr Georgia Gould
Chair, London Councils

9 March 2023

COVID-19: London's recovery three years on

Dear Sadiq and Georgia, I hope you are both well.

As you may be aware, earlier this year the GLA Oversight Committee launched an investigation into the London Recovery Programme and the London Recovery Board. The Committee met on 2nd February, just a few days after the three year anniversary of the World Health Organisation's decision to declare COVID-19 a global pandemic. The Committee, therefore, felt it was a natural opportunity to take stock of London's response to COVID-19. The purpose of this meeting was to examine the impact of the Recovery Programme and the Recovery Board, as well as discuss the plans for London's future partnership arrangements.

Several Recovery Board representatives gave evidence to the Committee. The Committee heard from GLA staff and the Chief Executive of London Councils, the London Policy Representative of the Federation of Small Businesses, the Executive Director of Performance at NHS England, and the Chief Executive of Kensington and Chelsea Social Council.

This letter summarises the Committee's findings and recommendations, which were informed by the evidence given to the Committee during its investigation, as well as by research.

The Committee welcomes the progress the Recovery Board has made since its inception in 2020, particularly with regard to the development of relationships and working arrangements with

partners across the capital. It is clear that the desire to recover from the pandemic created a shared sense of purpose, which helped the Recovery Board tackle structural inequalities by driving forward important initiatives, such as the Anchor Institutions Network, Building a Fairer City Plan and the Economic Recovery Framework.

The Committee was encouraged to hear at length from partners about the value added by the Recovery Board and the benefits it has brought to partnership working in London. The Committee heard that, through the Recovery Board, the GLA and London Councils had developed stronger, more mature relationships with partners, which will make them better prepared to deal with future emergencies in the capital. The Committee also heard that the co-chairing arrangements between the GLA and London Councils had created joint ownership of the overall Recovery Programme. The Committee welcomes these positive developments.

The Committee heard that the Recovery Board is soon to transition to a new partnership arrangement, which is expected to be broader in remit, focus on a smaller number of more challenging issues, and use the working title 'London Partnership Board'. It is important that the GLA and London Councils, as co-chairs of the Recovery Board, learn the lessons of partnership working over the last three years to maximise the impact of the London Partnership Board.

In this context, the Committee wishes to express the following concerns about the proposals for new partnership arrangements and seek reassurances from both the GLA and London Councils.

The Committee is concerned about the impact of the GLA's proposal to allocate just £200,000 in annual funding to the programme team supporting the London Partnership Board.

This represents a two thirds reduction in funding when compared to the money allocated in 2022-23, which is £600,000. During the investigation, GLA officials stated they were confident such a funding reduction would not impact the delivery of the London Partnership Board. GLA officials also stated the change in funding reflected a desire to embed the partnership work programme in GLA teams and partner organisations rather than in a separate team.¹

Whilst it acknowledges the anticipated benefits of transitioning to this arrangement, the Committee is concerned that there remains a significant risk that the funding reduction will result in less support for the London Partnership Board. The Committee has not seen information about how the London Partnership Board will be supported by other partner organisations beyond the GLA and from whom it will receive support.

More generally, the absence of an overarching organogram that describes the relative roles and responsibilities of organisations contributing to the Recovery Board have exacerbated the Committee's concerns about the future partnership arrangements.

Recommendation 1: That the GLA and London Councils should publish information about the resources allocated to the London Partnership Board, including partner contributions, and how the use and performance of these resources will be measured.

¹ GLA Oversight Committee 2 February 2023 [Draft Transcript](#)

Recommendation 2: That the GLA and London Councils should publish an organogram of the London Partnership Board that describes the roles and responsibilities of contributing organisations.

The Committee believes that responding to the cost of living crisis should be a major priority of the London Partnership Board.

The Committee strongly welcomes the GLA and London Councils' proposal to focus on a smaller number of more challenging issues in the London Partnership Board as this will enable an effective partnership response, that achieves tangible outcomes for Londoners.

During the investigation, partners suggested particular areas of focus for the London Partnership Board, including housing, homelessness, crime and security. However, the Committee believes the new Board risks duplicating efforts already being undertaken by other well-established partnerships in attempting to tackle deep-rooted, longstanding policy issues in London.

The Committee heard evidence from GLA officials that the risk of duplicating work was being managed and mitigated for the reasons the Committee has already identified. Officials stated that work was ongoing to ensure the new Board would have a clear and distinct remit from other Partnership Boards in the capital. Nevertheless, the Committee still has concerns about duplication and is unconvinced that the new Board would add value to the existing partnership responses to policy issues such as housing, homelessness, crime and security. The Committee believes the London Partnership Board would be more effective and achieve greater impact if it focused on emerging, cross-cutting issues, such as the cost of living crisis, as well as continuing to prioritise addressing structural inequalities.

Recommendation 3: The London Partnership Board should prioritise addressing the cost of living crisis and structural inequalities in its work programme, whilst avoiding any duplication of work.

There is a lack of clarity about the role of the Recovery Missions in the new partnership arrangements.

The GLA's decision to take a Recovery Mission-based approach has clearly helped partners to focus around a Grand Mission to recover from COVID-19, a shared goal that required a partnership response. The Committee heard that the task-and-finish group process that sat underneath each Recovery Mission allowed partner voices to be heard and shape the development of the Missions, and allowed flexibility and immediate action to be taken, and this was both welcome and effective.

It is less clear what role the Recovery Missions will play in the new partnership arrangements. Whilst GLA officials confirmed at the Committee's meeting that the Missions would remain in place for the foreseeable future, it is not clear how they will interact with the London Partnership Board and its work programme, which is likely to have a different focus to that of the Recovery Mission Framework. This issue needs to be clarified before the new Board is established.

Recommendation 4: The GLA should clarify the role of the Recovery Missions in the context of the new partnership arrangements and commit to the London Partnership Board regularly publishing performance metrics.

The Committee also heard during its investigation that the Recovery Missions with an economic focus had been easier to define as their delivery plans and performance measures were more easily developed and measured. In contrast, it was more challenging to define the Recovery Missions with non-economic focus, such as those Missions covering community and person-centred outcomes. Any new partnership arrangement must lead to improvements in the development of specific outcomes for non-economic Recovery Missions.

Recommendation 5: The GLA should further define the outcomes for its non-economic focused Recovery Missions.

The London Assembly has an important role to play in overseeing and scrutinising the London Partnership Board, its work programme and the Recovery Missions.

The Committee's investigation has identified the complex partnership and governance arrangements that sit beneath the Recovery Programme and Board. The Committee welcomes partners' desire not to pursue governance reforms as they risk utilising valuable resource that could otherwise be focused on delivering the partnership's work programme.

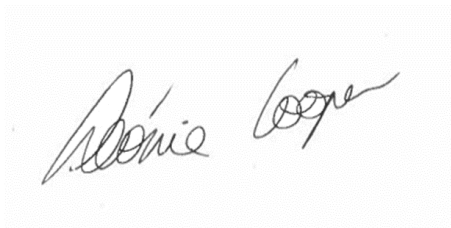
However, the Committee believes there needs to be a clear framework through which the London Partnership Board and its work programme can be overseen and scrutinised. In parallel, the Recovery Missions should be scrutinised thematically through meetings of the relevant London Assembly Committees.

The Committee believes the London Assembly is the most appropriate body to fulfil this function in the context of its pan-London strategic role, democratic legitimacy, and relationship with the Mayor of London and London Councils.

Recommendation 6: The GLA should commit to reporting to a London Assembly Plenary meeting on an annual basis and through the relevant Committees to explain the London Partnership Board's progress.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the Committee's letter by **6 April 2023**. Please copy Paul Goodchild, Principal Committee Manager, into your response via the following email address: paul.goodchild@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leonie Cooper', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Leonie Cooper AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee